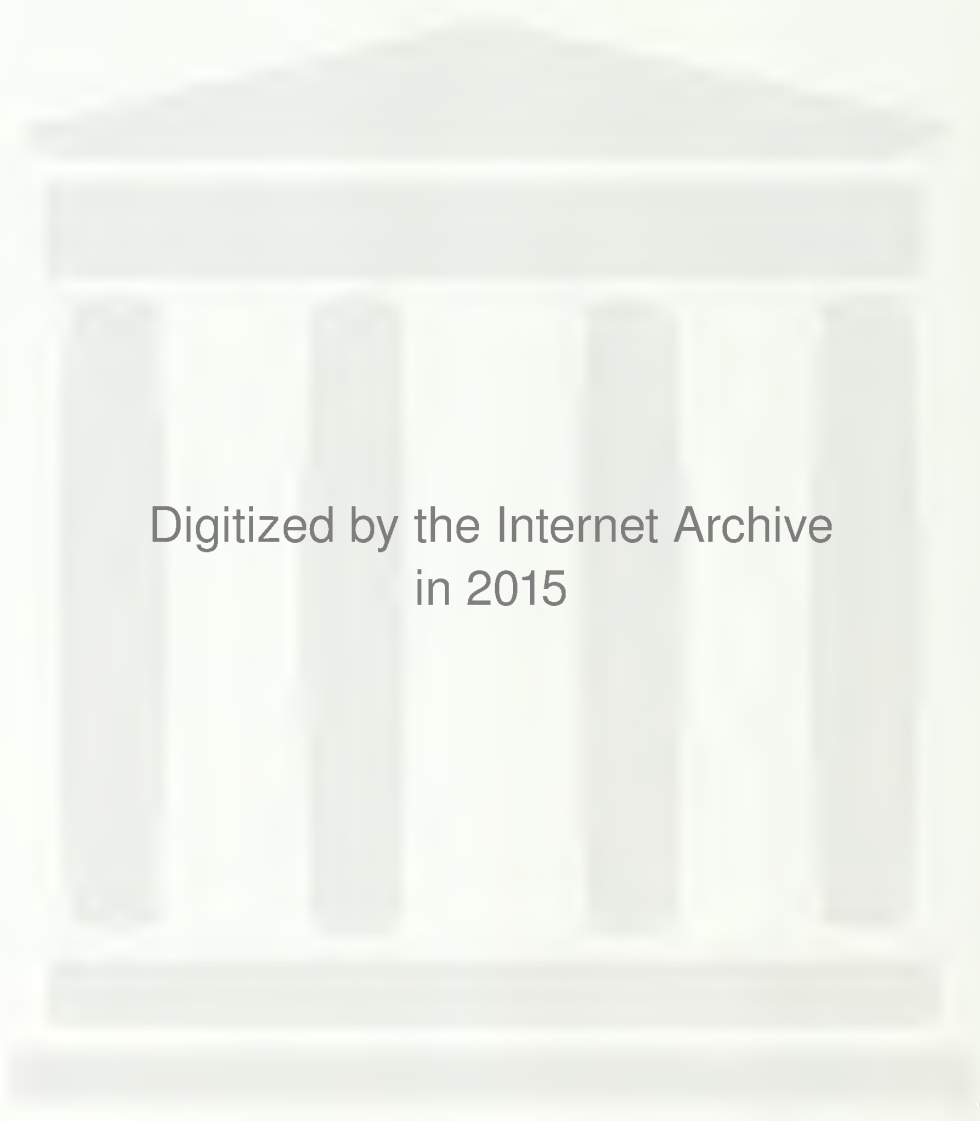


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An Early Educational Project

...of...

Lebanon Town.

By E. GRUMBINE, M. D.,
MT. ZION, LEBANON COUNTY, PA.

PAPER READ BEFORE THE LEBANON COUNTY HISTORICAL

SOCIETY, APRIL 28, 1905.

--- VOL. III. No. 5.

An Early Educational Project of Lebanon Town.

If George Steitz and his contemporaries, who lived and had their being in the middle of the eighteenth century along the banks of the Quittapahilla, could, Rip Van Winkle like, come back from their long sleep; if they could come back from that "mysterious bourn from whence no traveler returns," to revisit the scenes of their lives; if they could come amongst us and learn of our wonderful system of public schools; if they could behold our splendid palatial school buildings which surpass, in their architectural beauty and in their elegant modern appointments and equipments, the palaces of the princes and kings of their day, they, to say the least, would be astonished beyond expression.

Moreover, if we, of the Lebanon County Historical Society, could be permitted to take a flight backward through the centuries to the time when Lebanon was a village of fifty small log houses, and when the settlers in the Quittapahilla region were loyal subjects of King George II, and if we could see the meagre and pitiful beginnings in the way of educational opportunities then afforded to the youth of the settlement, we should, perhaps, be equally astounded.

However true it may be that the early immigrants from the Rhine countries frequently came, accompanied by their Lutheran, or Reformed, or Moravian pastors and schoolmasters, it is doubtless equally true that in many localities the children, both in villages and in the more thinly settled districts, were sadly in want of schools and school teachers.

This must have been the case in the early days of Lebanon, where it is made evident that efforts were put forth to obtain for the children of poor parents, and for such as were

outside the pale of church schools, such educational conditions as were woefully lacking, and to institute a school with a wide open door, as early as the middle of the eighteenth century.

It appears that some time within the decade between 1750 and 1760, a certain Charles Cornelius Raboteau, who had quit service in the French army, removed from Montgomery county to Lebanon town, or Quittopohilla district, as this part of the valley was then known.

Evidently he was a man of education and literary culture, and his intention was to enter upon the vocation of a pedagogue.

Finding the conditions not very favorable to his plans he set about improving them by canvassing the settlement for the purpose of enlisting the sympathies and gaining the co-operation of the leading men of the village and vicinity.

The schools connected with the different church organizations were few and were all supplied with masters. There was no vacancy for Mr. Raboteau, and hence the one thing for him to do was to create one, if possible, which he might fill. To do so there must be established along new lines another school, and it was his purpose and plan to institute no less than a *free school* which children, regardless of religious or church connections, might attend without money and without price.

During the first half of the eighteenth-century there seemed to have been prevalent, not only in the new but also in the old world, a philanthropic or altruistic spirit laboring for the education of the poor. Good Queen Anne founded a free school at Westminster and supported numerous parochial charity schools as early as 1698, and, before the middle of the following century, nearly 2,000 of these schools had been established in Great Britain and Ireland.

Ludwig Hoëcker was imbued with this same spirit when he established his Sabbath-school at Ephrata in 1740, as well as Rev. Dr. Bellamy when he founded a Sunday school on the banks of the Lehigh.

John Henry Pestalozzi, of Zurich, Switzerland, was a lad of thirteen when Charles Cornelius Raboteau arrived at Lebanon Town, and sixteen years later we find him turning his Swiss "farm into a school for educating poor children in reading, writing and working!"

Whether it was this same love of his kind—this same spirit of altruism burning in Raboteau's heart and prompting him to noble action, or whether it was something akin to the narrow fires of modern patriotism, seeking self aggrandizement and a *big salary*, must remain undermined for want of evidence. But these things happened nearly one hundred and fifty years ago, and we will let the enchantment of distance shed such a charitable light over the scenes and incidents of that far-away time as will bring into view only the better side.

But how was Mr. Raboteau to establish a free school under the adverse conditions of those times? It was half a century or more before the old Commoner, Thaddeus S. Stevens, and Gov. Geo. Wolfe, the champions of the common school system, were born, and there was no Pennsylvania State Legislature to appropriate six millions of dollars out of the public treasury, or to fix a high salary for teachers by statute law.

Neither were there any Scotch-American millionaires nor Western Kerosene monopolists to appeal to for aid, for the iron millionaire had not been evolved and Standard Oil Kings had not been crowned nor anointed with petroleum!

But the altruistic Raboteau conceived of a scheme wherewith to raise the money needful for his purpose. He well knew the human passion for games of chance, and he, together with his coadjutors, agreed upon a method more in vogue then than now, and that method was nothing less than that of a LOTTERY!

At first sight it would seem a questionable mode of raising money for so laudable a purpose. But in olden times the lottery was a scheme often resorted to, even in the building of

churches. Dr. Egle, in his "History of Dauphin and Lebanon Counties," states that when the first stone church was erected by the Reformed congregation in Schaefferstown as late as 1796, the money was raised by this method. The learned historian further says that "in *all* public undertakings at this period moneys necessary therefor were raised by means of a lottery, whether church or public building, bridge or turnpike road." The same method was resorted to in paying for the ————— Reformed church at Lebanon, and Dr. Egle gives a *fac simile* of ticket No. 1547, which was sold for \$100, and which bears the following legend:

"Authorized by law of the State of Pennsylvania for defraying the expenses of erecting the churches lately built by the German Reformed congregations, respectively, in the borough of Lebanon and in the town of Heidelberg, in the county of Dauphin."

"This ticket will entitle the bearer to such prize as may be drawn to its number, if demanded within twelve months after drawing. Subject to a deduction of twenty per cent. February 19th, 1800."

(Signed)

HENRY SHAEFFER.

It is a fact well-known to many of our older people that the cost of building the Union Canal was defrayed, in part at least, with money raised by a lottery. The writer has quite a vivid recollection of a certain bookmark in one of his grandfather's books—a mysterious piece of paper, two by six inches in size, printed in red and black inks, which was neither a bank note nor a landscape picture, but which was explained to be a veritable lottery ticket issued by the Union Canal Company. This ticket is now in the possession of our society.

Raboteau's scheme was discussed for some time—for days and probably for weeks. The discussion was carried on at various places in the straggling village wherever persons congregated,—at the tavern, at the shoemaker's and at religious gatherings of a Sunday. At the smithy of Christian Gish

the talk was of the proposed charity school; at the public house of Philip Greenwald and at the tavern kept by Christopher Wegman,—for Lebanon Town had two inns and two innkeepers then,—the conversation was about the lottery scheme; and the same subject formed the theme of discussion in Casper Shnebely's store and at George Hoch's tannery.

Arguments were presented *pro* and *con* in the rich brogue of the Scotch-Irish and in the Rhenish guttural of the Teuton. The former were represented by such historic characters as John Reynolds, William Hide, James McNees and Jno. Clark; the latter, by George Steitz, Anastasius Uhler, Jacob Licht, Conrad Brown, Karl Sholly and even the famous Rev. John Casper Stoever himself.

To win over some of the people Mr. Raboteau offered to conduct religious services whenever he should be desired to do so. He was willing, besides instructing the youth of the district, to do service in three churches, viz: The Church of England, the German Lutheran and the Presbyterian churches, on the Sabbath and on other suitable days in the absence of the regular clergymen when their arduous duties rendered their presence necessary elsewhere.

In this respect he followed the example of John Conrad Templeman, then still living, but bereft of his eyesight, who, for more than twenty years, served as a lay preacher in the Reformed church. He preached at the Hill Church, at the Church of the Swatara and at Lebanon, and died in 1761.

The scheme was finally approved of and so Raboteau and his friends determined to petition to Governor Denny. The petition asks for the privilege of conducting a lottery to raise money for the purpose of erecting and maintaining a charity school for the term of seven years. By the end of that time it was hoped the community would be able to support the school in a legitimate way.

The petition is couched in the verbose language and old-fashioned orthography of the period and is very interesting to the antiquary and historian. The original document is carefully preserved in the state library at Harris-

burg. In it is set forth the fact that Lebanon Town, being on the remote frontier, needed the school to encourage strangers to come and settle here, increase the population and boom the town.

A committee was named, comprising sixteen persons, to carry out the plan adopted, and Rabotean himself was appointed not only to carry the petition to Philadelphia and lay it before Governor Denny, but he was also empowered to act as the committee's agent for advertising the scheme and having the necessary tickets printed.

This committee of sixteen consisted of influential property owners, for among them are at least ten whose names appear in Dr. Egle's list of persons having taken up land warrants of greater or less acreage.

There being no evidence to the contrary we may safely believe that the petition was granted by the Governor, that the lottery was drawn resulting in the drawing of a few prizes and many blanks, that the free school was established and Charles Cornelius Rabotean installed as teacher.

We may likewise infer that in the course of a dozen years the school became self-sustaining, for we learn that a certain Lutheran minister, Rev. Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg by name, and the successor of the Rev. John Casper Stoeber, recorded in his church register, under the date of May 12, 1773, the statement that the congregation was then supporting a schoolmaster, giving the names of those who paid the "Herr Schulmeister's" money in advance.

The following year of 1760 we learn that George Steitz gave a lot of ground to the Lutheran congregation and on the northeast corner of this lot was built the first Lutheran school house. It is more than likely that on this spot was established the first free school of Lebanon and that Charles Cornelius Rabotean was its first master.

* * * * *

The following is a verbatim copy of the petition sent to Governor Denny, and also a copy of a statement made by the committee of sixteen, certifying to the appointment of Mr. Rabotean as their agent for carrying out the lottery scheme.

The copies of both papers are certified to by my friend, Luther R. Kelker, Custodian of Public Records, State Library, at Harrisburg, Pa., to whom I am under obligations for courtesies extended to me.

THE PETITION.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOUR;

We, your Honor's most humble and most obedient servants, whose names are hereunto subscribed, inhabiting that part of the province of Pennsylvania, known by the name of Quittopahella, wherein a town, under the name of Lebanon Town, is laid out,—and a considerable number of houses already built, and a great number of lots taken up, which by contract must be built on this year, and in reality this remote part of the province, which is now almost become the frontier, has a fine prospect of being in a short time as populous as almost any in it, have thought it good and adviseable for the benefit of the people already settled therein, and the encouragement of others to come and settle there, to calculate some *scheme* for the introducing of literature amongst us, and the bringing up of our youth in the Fear, Love and Knowledge of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ, in both the *English* and *German* languages.—For the which laudable end and purpose, we have for some time past, fixt on a master every way qualified for our design, and have been so happy as to prevail with him to settle amongst us, and, besides instructing our youth, he is willing to do service for us in our three churches, viz :

The Church of England, the German Lutheran and Presbyterian churches, on Sabbath days, and other suitable days, in absence of our clergymen, who have so many congregations to attend, that they can but seldom come amongst us, which good opportunity will be of great comfort to the aged, and a great assistance to the bringing up of our youth as good Christians and Loyal Subjects. But, as most beginnings are hard, so it happens that we have many poor families settled in our town and neighborhood, willing and desirous to

have their children taught, but unable to pay their part towards supporting a master, and the *whole* expence of building and support would fall too heavy upon us, your humble petitioners.—

Thus, in order not to be, if possible, without the blessings, comforts and benefits aforementioned, have fell (as we humbly hope) on an innocent scheme to erect and maintain a charity school, in the town aforesaid, for the term of *seven years*. And we doubt not but, by the time they are expired, it will please God to enable us to maintain a master.

We have therefore calculated or schem'd a *lottery*. And with profound submission to your Honour, take this opportunity and method to beg and intreat your Hon'r's assistance in this affair. Not doubting you will, of your wonted goodness and generosity, consider our circumstances, and afford us such a portion of your favour and patronage as will be necessary for bringing our innocent, laudable and, in these dangerous times, *necessary* scheme to maturity, and we, and many hundreds more, shall, as in duty bound, ever pray, &c.

(Signed)

John Casper Stever, Lutheran minister.

Anastasius Uller,

Henrich ———

Jacob Licht,

George Reynold,

James Clark,

John Clarke,

Konrad Braun,

William Hide,

Karl Schally,

George Stits,

Michael Brown,

John Reynolds,

James McNees.

THE STATEMENT.

BE IT KNOWN UNTO ALL CHRISTIAN PEOPLE WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL OR MAY CONCERN—

That we, whose names and seals are hereunto wrote and affixed, being appointed managers for the lottery

•Not legible.

schem'd, and to be carried in execution if his Honour, William Denny, Esq., our worthy Governor, will please to favour us with his permission for the same, schem'd for the erecting and maintaining a charity school for the benefit of the inhabitants of Lebanon Town and the neighborhood of Quittopahella, as per petition to his Honour for the same fully appears, have, for the great love we have to (and confidence in) Mr. Charles Cornelius Raboteau, appointed him, and do by these presents appoint him, the said Charles Cornelius Raboteau, our well-beloved and trustworthy friend, to solicit and be the bearer of our petition to his Honour, the Governor, and in our names and on our behalfs to act, as in his prudence and discretion he shall see meet, both in respect as concerning his Honour, the Governor, and also every other officer, magistrate, or gentleman whatsoever, with whom it shall or may be necessary for our said trustworthy friend to advise with, or to go to, on the aforesaid account; and, also, having obtained the grant for the same, to go to the printers and in our names contract with them to make for us as many tickets, advertisements, &c., as shall be necessary for completing said lottery.

As witness our hands and seals as above said.

Lebanon Town, in Lancaster County, and Lebanon Township, this —— day of June, Anno Domini, 1750.

Sign'd, sealed and delivered in presence of us :

Konrad Braun,
Karl Schally,
Jakob Licht,
Anastasius Uller,
Lehnart Umberger,
Henrich Smitt,
Abraham Korman,
Ralph Whitesites,

George Reynolds,
James Clark,
Michael Brown,
John Clark,
Henrich ——*,
John Reynolds,
James McNees,
George Stits.

*Not legible.

CERTIFICATE FROM MR. KELKER.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the original document, now on file in Division of Public Records, Penn'a State Library, at Harrisburg.

LUTHER R. KELKER,

Custodian Division of Public Records, Penn'a State Library.

In testimony whereof I hereby affix the seal of this department.

January 26, 1905.

[SEAL]

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